

The CRIMSON STAIN MYSTERY

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Novelized by ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE
from the Consolidated Motion Picture Triumph

Synopsis.

HAROLD STANLEY, son of a New York publisher, is in love with Florence Montrose, daughter of Dr. Montrose, who has spent his life perfecting a machine to rejuvenate humanity. Stanley has been inciting police activity in the mysterious murder of fourteen wealthy New Yorkers, each strangled by a being of supernatural power. The first clue of the murderer is obtained by Florence Montrose, when Stanley's father is made the fifteenth Crimson Stain victim in her home. In an attempt to put Stanley out of the way because of his crusade Pierre La Rue, the slayer, discovers that Florence recognizes him. La Rue's man Tanner kidnaps Florence. Stanley runs the flying auto down only to find that the girl has been put into a hypnotic trance. The spell is broken by La Rue's unexpected visit to the Montrose home. Then Florence is lured by a forged note to a house in the Bronx which is blown up just as Stanley escapes with her. Florence recognizes Tanner and follows him. She is caught and made a prisoner in Vanya Tosca's apartment. Lambert Truxton, the diamond king, is found dead in Vanya's apartment. Florence escapes from Tanner as he is taking her from Vanya's.

Pierre La Rue plans to kill both Florence and Stanley. His plans fail and La Rue is captured, but explodes a bomb among the police and escapes. A photograph of the Crimson Stain man is obtained by taking a picture of Vanya Tosca's eye just after she had been hypnotized by him.

CHAPTER VII.

"The Devil's Symphony."

WHEN Robert Clayton dropped in casually for a chat with Harold Stanley at the latter's private office in the Examiner Building a few days later he found Stanley triumphantly inspecting something that seemed, at first glance, to be a photograph of an ancient and badly cracked mosaic.

"Look!" exclaimed Harold, pointing to the photograph. "Not so bad, is it—considering I had to fit eleven pieces together?"

"Good boy!" approved Clayton. "It will help identify your man. And that's Vanya Tosca's eye, is it?"

He frowned a little, involuntarily, as he asked the question.

"Yes," replied Harold, noting the frown. "And, by the way, she'll be here in a few minutes. So if you want a chat with her—"

"I don't," retorted Clayton. "I don't want anything more to do with her."

"Well, you'll have to treat her civilly if you meet her here," exhorted Harold. "I've sent for her to ask her to tell me more about this man Pierre La Rue she started to speak of when she fell into the trance. By the way, I suppose your mother got my acceptance?"

"To the mask-ball tonight?" asked Bob. "Oh, I suppose so. I'm glad you're coming. We—"

"Is it to be a mask ball?" asked Stanley in mild interest. "I had forgotten that. I thought it was just to be an ordinary dance, like—"

"Did you ever know my mother to do anything 'ordinary'?" laughed Clayton. "Not she. This is to be a sort of variation on the usual mask ball. The guests are not only to wear masks at the dance itself, but they are to come to the house in masks, so that none of the dressing-rooms nobody can expect who is who. It's a silly idea. But mother's awfully keen on it. So don't forget to put on your mask before you get to the house."

"I won't forget," promised Stanley, adding, "but won't that give thieves a good chance to slip in as guests?"

An office boy tapped at the door bearing Vanya Tosca's card. At a nod from Stanley the boy departed to return a second later ushering the visitor into the office. Clayton nodded stiffly in response to Vanya's beaming smile, and, with a word of good-by to Harold, he stalked out.

Harold picked up the mosaic photograph and handed it to her.

"What's this?" she asked, unconcernedly, looking at the picture and then at Harold.

With the same outward indifference she handed the photograph back to him. As she did so she let her fingers rest for a moment, as if by chance, on his. The touch was clinging and warm. Instinctively Harold's eyes sought hers in inquiry. She was gazing up at him with a look akin to adoration.

Startled, yet flattered, at such a look from so beautiful a woman, he opened his lips to speak.

The spell was broken by the flinging open of the door leading to the outer corridor. Dayton Farish stamped unannounced into the office. Vanya wheeled about to face the intruder. He glanced at her face, whose expression Harold could not see.

"I'll call some other time when you're less busy, Mr. Stanley," she said. "Good-by."

She was gone before Harold could protest. He turned angrily on the detective.

"Look here, Mr. Farish!" he said, vexed. "When I gave you the privilege of coming into my office at any time by that rear door to consult with me about the Crimson Stain case, I didn't mean that you should come in without knocking. I—"

"There's enough 'knocking' done

here without my taking a hand at it," snapped Farish. "And that's what I'm here about now. Did you write this editorial?"—yanking a copy of the Examiner from his inner pocket. "This editorial in today's paper, blaming me again for incompetence in the Crimson Stain mystery? Did you?"

"I most surely did," assented Stanley. "And, as I warned you before, the only way for you to avoid these attacks is to show progress in the case. Now clear out, please. I'm busy."

He turned to his desk with an air of finality. Farish stepped fiercely toward him. Then, catching sight of the mosaic photograph on the desk, the detective halted in his tracks, stared for an instant, stood irresolute and presently went out as he had come.

Stanley's eye fell on a scrap of paper lying in the rug midway between his desk and the hallway door. Now, a scrap of paper on the floor of a newspaper office is as common a sight as a grain of sand on a bathing beach; and it attracts no more attention.

But, not half an hour earlier, Harold's private office had been swept and put to rights for the day. Since then, besides himself, only Clayton and Farish and Vanya Tosca had been in the room. Thus, this folded bit of paper must have fallen from the pocket of one of those four. Harold stooped idly, and picked it up.

It contained five lines of typed lettering. The first line was composed of four words. The rest of the lettering looked like a novice's efforts to use a typewriter. This is what Harold Stanley read:

"BALL CLAYTON HOME TONIGHT. MUST GET CLAYTON FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLAR NECKLACE. COME TO THE DEN IMMEDIATELY."

THE CRIMSON STAIN.

In the big low-ceiled room at the back of Tanner's apartment Pierre La Rue awaited the followers he had summoned.

One by one the others entered. One by one they crept silently to seats near the wall.

"Those of you who are to operate at the Clayton ball at Riverdale tonight already have your orders. I report summons to the rest of you to report here in case of emergency. The \$50,000 Clayton necklace is worth the trouble, and there'll be other dividends besides. At 11 o'clock every light in the Clayton house goes out. At the same second Morrison snatches the necklace. If he can make a getaway, he will. If he can't, he's to pass the necklace to me or to Vanya. I want to be able to dispose of the jewelry without too much silly interference from young Clayton or the dear police. So when Mrs. Clayton goes to her room afterward she is going to find a box of flowers on her bed. She will open it. After that—well, for a while after that her son will have other things to think of besides a few lost jewels. Tanner!"

The thief he addressed slouched forward.

"You bought the orchids?"

Tanner left the room, presently returning with a long florist box, which he opened and laid on the table. Rank upon rank of gloriously beautiful orchids were exposed to view. Pierre inspected the box critically; then nodded approval.

"Now, the other," he commanded.

Tanner, with visible reluctance, crossed the room to a cupboard and cautiously drew therefrom a black bag, which he carried at arm's length by a string. The others made way for him with ludicrous haste. As he progressed toward the table the bag writhed and twisted in his grasp.

"Hurry up there!" ordered La Rue, impatiently. "Don't be so slow. Are you afraid of a worm like that?"

"Yes," said Tanner, unashamed, "I am."

Tanner hastily averted his gaze from his master's and turned to the snake as to a less dreaded adversary. Still holding the bag in gingerly fashion, he loosed its drawstrings and held it above the box of orchids.

Out dropped a wriggling gray snake into the blossoms. Before the agile little serpent could coil itself to strike Tanner clapped the cover on the box and tied it fast.

"See it is in place at the right time tonight," said La Rue curtly. "When Mrs. Clayton opens the box she is due to forget her lost necklace—and everything else."

Harold Stanley that evening spent more time in preparing for the Clayton mask ball than did any other guest.

Propped on the dresser in front of him at the side of his mirror was the photograph of Pierre La Rue. In the intervals of his task at make-up Stanley practiced imitating the pose of the photographed head, and he sought to copy from memory the gestures and the general bearing of this man of whom he had caught such brief glimpses in real life.

The Clayton house, like that of Dr. Montrose next door, was set well back from the street, in its own grounds. When Stanley's taxicab turned into the street it came to a halt. For the thoroughfare was blocked with motor cars, which were depositing guests at the Claytons.

"I'll get out here," called Stanley to his chauffeur as the latter began to maneuver the taxicab into a gap in the line half a block below the house.

He left the cab, paid his fare and

struck off on foot across the grounds toward the front door. As he passed a clump of shrubbery a dark figure glided forth from the shadows and accosted him.

"Chief," whispered the man, "it's all right so far. Kiel and Morrison have compared their watches. Kiel is hiding in the cellar right now with his hand on the house's electric light switch. Any orders?"

Stanley shook his head, motioned the man back into the shrubbery and strode on.

Reaching the house Harold assumed a timidity of manner, walking as one who hopes to elude notice, keeping as much as possible out of sight. It was thus, he argued, that the man he was impersonating would probably comport himself.

From a point of vantage, as he descended from the dressing-room, he glanced over the crowded ballroom's occupants.

A man and a girl were greeting the hostess as Stanley's glance fell upon the ballroom. Despite their masks, he easily recognized the two as Florence Montrose and her father. He wondered amusedly how Florence had been able to coax the staid and society-hating old doctor to come to a frivolous affair of this sort.

It was at about this time that a maid, going from the women's dressing-room to Mrs. Clayton's bedroom, saw a long white box lying across the foot of Mrs. Clayton's bed. The maid glanced more closely at it and saw it bore the label of a fashionable florist.

Being inquisitive, she untied the string that bound the box shut. She was about to raise the lid for a peep at the contents when she remembered she had been sent in search of hairpins.

Stanley looked surreptitiously at the watch he had remembered tonight to put in the pocket of his white waistcoat. The hour was perilously close to 11 o'clock. He left the alcove, and with seeming carelessness he began to move through the groups of guests toward Mrs. Clayton.

At the same time another masked figure advanced with equal attempt at carelessness from the far end of the ballroom to the spot where Mrs. Clayton stood chatting with several masked guests. He, too, took out a watch and consulted it.

This second masked man chanced to pass close to Robert Clayton, who he looked at his watch. The action caught Robert's attention.

He remembered what Harold Stanley had said about a mask ball offering a splendid chance for thieves. This man was working his way toward Mrs. Clayton. And Robert cautiously followed him.

Now Pierre La Rue was a criminal genius. Yet every criminal leaves some defective stone on his structure of crime. And Pierre's mistake tonight had been the choice of his henchman, Morrison, to steal the necklace.

Morrison was one of the most dexterous and most light-fingered thieves in America. He could "lift" any form of jewelry, from a watch to a necklace, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, without awakening his victim's suspicions. Seemingly, he was therefore the very man for this job.

Harold Stanley was scarcely two steps away from Mrs. Clayton. Morrison, on the other side, was pausing, within eighteen inches of her, to brush a fleck of powder off his cuff. Robert Clayton, his eyes on Morrison, was not six feet behind the man he was following. A dance was in full swing.

Then—every light in the house was all at once extinguished.

Morrison had gauged his distance and his directions to a hair's breadth. Out shot his hand. His fingers fell lightly on the clasp of Mrs. Clayton's necklace. Less than a second later the \$50,000 treasure was nestling in his pocket, and he was beginning to edge silently toward a long French window that led out into the veranda.

Then, as suddenly as they had gone out, all the lights blazed up again.

A chatter of talk and laughter swept the room. But only for a moment. Then it was hushed by an involuntary cry from Mrs. Clayton:

"My necklace! My beautiful necklace! It's gone!"

Instantly all was confusion. Robert Clayton, striding forward, called authoritatively:

"My mother's necklace has been stolen. May I trouble you all to unmask—at once?"

As he spoke his keen eyes were scouring the crowded room in search of Morrison. And almost at once he discovered him standing near the window. With an exclamation of anger, Clayton rushed forward through the impeding throng of guests to seize the man he sought.

Morrison saw him coming and guessed his intent. The thief cast an agonized glance around him. A few feet away he saw a masker whom he was sure he recognized as Pierre La Rue.

Slipping past the intervening people, he brushed lightly against Stanley and at the same time defiantly thrust into Harold's hand the diamond necklace. Then he continued his own course toward the open French window.

Harold, with a start of amazement, felt the necklace dropped into his hand, which was half-closed. At once he realized what had happened. He also realized that he would have much trouble in explaining, publicly, the way it had come into his possession, and how he himself chanced to be thus disguised.

Clayton, meanwhile, had forced his way through the astonished guests until he was almost within arm's reach of the man he wanted. Morrison, watching his approach, saw that the time for bluffing was past.

Wheeling, he bolted through the long French window, out onto the veranda. Clayton at his heels. Across the veranda he dashed. He vaulted

over the low rail into a patch of rose bushes below, just as the pursuing Clayton grabbed for him.

Bob caught one of the fellow's flying coat-tails. There was a sharp rip of cloth and Morrison was running at top speed across the lawn toward the street, leaving his torn coat-tail in Bob's clenched hand.

Clayton vaulted the rail and set off as fast as his legs would carry him after his prey. He saw Morrison leap into a waiting automobile and heard him shout to the chauffeur. The latter was evidently waiting for him, for the car's engine was going.

The car swung out into the highway and whizzed away to northward, leaving Bob Clayton.

An obnoxious noise close behind him caused Bob to turn. Up the street, at a speed of perhaps fifty miles an hour, a motorcycle was whizzing. It was two-seated and contained but one rider.

On the instant Bob Clayton threw up both hands and yelled to the cyclist to stop. As the man, wonderingly, slowed down, Bob sprang to the seat behind him, pointing to the fast receding automobile and panting:

"Catch that car for me! In the name of the law!"

Foot by foot the motorcycle overhauled the fleeing automobile. Two miles farther on it was alongside.

Clayton made a flying leap that landed him on the automobile's running board. The masked chauffeur, evidently lost his nerve. For, seeing himself being overtaken, he brought the car to a halting halt, sprang from the wheel and ran as fast as he could.

Clayton's arms were groping for Morrison. The latter, seeing escape was hopeless, met his attack. Together, locked in a fierce grapple, they lurched from the running board of the car to the roadway. There, silent, tense, murderous, they fought.

The car had halted midway on a little bridge that spanned a deep and narrow stream. Clayton's furious onslaught gradually drove Morrison back against the rail of this bridge.

The rail was old and rotting. Morrison ran in to clinch with his foe. Clayton delivered an upper cut that the in-rushing Morrison was just too late to block. The blow caught him flush on the point of the jaw.

Backward, reeled Morrison, half stunned; and his full weight crashed against the decayed bridge rail. The rail snapped like a straw under the impact.

Still carried backward by the impetus of his own weight, Morrison pitched over the edge, clawed helplessly at the air and crashed headlong downward into the rocky stream that ran far below him.

Meantime, at the Clayton house, Harold Stanley suddenly found himself in extremely tight quarters.

An examination of the guests' faces would quickly prove to the Claytons that this bearded and otherwise made-up person was a stranger to them. And questions would arise as to how he came to be there.

Questions would undoubtedly be followed by search. The necklace would be found in his pocket.

No, it was high time to get away; and to remove his disguise.

But as he reached the hallway he found himself face to face with Florence Montrose. The girl (after one wildly unbelieving look at the man she believed to be Pierre La Rue) gave a stifled cry of horror and slid to the floor in a dead faint.

Immediately the hallway was choked with people who gathered about the swooning girl. Some one shouted loudly for Dr. Montrose. Others called for water to revive her, or ran scurrying in search of it.

In the turmoil Harold had no chance to reach the front door, as he had planned. The only way open to him led upstairs.

Acting on the idea, he sped unnoticed up the broad staircase, along an upper hall and into the first room whose door was ajar. He entered and shut the door behind him.

By the light of a single shaded electric lamp Stanley saw he was in a bedroom. In the foot of the bed lay a long flower box. Before he had time to notice more he heard footsteps coming toward him along the hall. He slipped into a clothes closet and drew the door almost shut behind him.

Peering through the crack he saw a butler and a maid carry the unconscious Florence into the room and lay her gently on the bed. As they did so she opened her eyes.

"It's all right, Miss Montrose," said the maid soothingly. "Just you lie here and rest and Dr. Montrose will be here presently."

They tiptoed out leaving her. Harold, watching through the door crack, waited only to be certain they were gone before coming out into the room. But, as he looked, he saw a strange thing that held him, for a moment, motionless.

The cover of the flower box at the foot of the bed was beginning to move, with queer jerky motions. Then one corner of it rose up. The snake, annoyed by the commotion in the room, was tiring of its resting place. Inch by inch it crawled out of the box and onto the counterpane. Then, catching sight of the girl, the reptile coiled, angrily, to strike.

At the same instant, Harold Stanley flung himself forward, with a cry of horror; seized the snake's neck, broke it with one convulsive squeeze, and hurled the dead creature out of the open window.

Florence, at sight of the supposed La Rue, screamed in terror.

"Hush, dear! Hush!" begged Harold, tearing off his mask. "Don't be afraid. Look! I have the necklace! And I've learned a lot of important things, tonight. I—"

He paused. The door from the hall had opened silently. Dr. Montrose stood on the threshold.

(To be continued next week.)

Miss Della Shelden Jackson, secretary of the board of trustees, has returned to the city after spending the summer north, and has reopened her apartment at the Concord.

Mrs. Nanette B. Paul, class of 1900, professor of parliamentary law, is president of Paul Institute, of this city, which had a successful opening last week.

Mrs. Sue Lacy Press, a student of the class of 1914, has returned to the United States, after a protracted stay in England. After a short stay with her father, John Lacy, she has rejoined her husband, Prof. Abram Press, in the West. Prof. Press was also a student in the class of 1914.

E. K. Hotelling, class of 1916, has received an official appointment in Japan and will leave the city soon for his new post.

Mrs. Leslie Flenner Wright and Mrs. Elizabeth Smith Keith, both of the class of 1917, are brides, they expect to be graduated with the class. Mrs. Wright, already has returned to the college. Mrs. Keith still is at her summer home at Rutland, Vt., but will return next month. Wintermute W. Sloan, class of 1916, is absent from the city on his honeymoon.

NOTES OF WASHINGTON COLLEGE OF LAW

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Catholic University Notes.

The Spanish Carmelites of Tucson, Ariz., where they have been established for the last eight years, have opened a house of studies at the university. They have purchased a site quite near the university, and will conduct there the "College of Our Lady of Mount Carmel." The new institution will be solemnly blessed today, when Bishop Shanahan will say the first mass for the new community. Rev. Joseph Maria Iasoli, of the Order of Discalced Carmelites, is the superior.

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate, generally known as the Oblate Fathers, will open formally their new house of studies at the Catholic University, on Thursday, November 16.

Cardinal Gibbons will preside at the ceremony and will bless the beautiful edifice. Bishop Shanahan, rector of the Catholic University, will say the mass, and Bishop Fallon, of London, Ontario, formerly pastor of the Holy Angels' Church, in Buffalo, will preach.

Among other valuable gifts of books recently made to the library is a rare edition of the Epigrams of Martial, published at Venice, by Baptist De Tortis, July 17, 1488. It is a gift of Rev. Henry J. Noon, of St. James Church, New Bedford, Mass.

Various improvements have been made at the university during the summer months. A large new boiler has been added to the heating plant, a new storage battery installed, and arrangements made to furnish high pressure steam more economically to the kitchens.

During the spring and summer, the University Museum has been enriched by many gifts, and its contents re-arranged scientifically and in a very artistic manner by the custodian, Dr. Hyvernatt. It occupies a large hall on the third floor of McMahon Hall.

One Thousand Dollars in Prizes!



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This week is Edison week and we are observing the occasion by giving an Edison recital every day at our store and also by making it possible for a certain number of people in this community to compete in the

\$1,000 Prize Contest



—for the best description of the enjoyment and musical education derived in the home from Mr. Edison's favorite and probably greatest invention

THE NEW EDISON

We have set aside a limited number of these wonderful new instruments. They have been specially tested and will be placed in homes in this city on an absolutely free three days' trial during Edison Week.

Those who secure the benefit of these Edison Week free trials will be eligible to the big \$1,000 contest for the best opinions of the value of the New Edison in the home.

These opinions must not be over 200 words in length. Their literary quality does not count. Professional writers and all members of the phonograph trade are barred.

What the Edison Company wants are the real heart-felt opinions of the people after they have heard this wonderful new instrument in their own homes.

First Prize \$500, Second Prize \$200, Third Prize \$100.

Then there are consolation prizes aggregating \$200. In addition, the Edison Company will pay ten cents per word for opinions which, although not winning prizes, are considered suitable for publication.

See Us Before Monday Noon About the Contest

And Our Free Trial Offer. Edison Owners Are Eligible. Come to Us for an Entry Blank.

Hecht & Co.

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North American Manners.

The North American child is too often merely the by-product of marriage. It serves as an outlet for that pride which its parents cannot always reasonably take in themselves. It is petted, cajoled, pampered, overindulged, and under-disciplined.

There is evolved a strange pyramid for whom the world soon grows banal, who is destitute of the petitionary appeal of childhood, and who survives an already anticipated and thoroughly analyzed future with the cold eyes of unattainable knowledge. The world is its football. It is smart beyond description. But there is in the forward garden of its life no

sheltered bud where may bloom the flowers of graciousness or peace. Of such will be the new aristocracy, and its traditions will be of grandfathers who, by virtue of that fine native-American long-headedness, delivered the goods of their period and were promptly and suitably rewarded. But there will be a few traditions of courtliness, scant reminders

that noblesse oblige, and but scattered memories of inherited responsibilities. The sentimental dollar will surely dominate. One generation was too busy collecting and the other will be too busy spending. The second generation offers no promise, and the third but little. The fourth will probably open a new and finer epoch.—Harpur's for August.